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## The Influence of Teacher's Competence towards the Motivation of Students in Learning English

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### Abstract

*This study is intended to find out the influence of the teacher's competence towards the motivation of students in learning English. A questionnaire was given to 24 students at a sports school in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The five (5) closed and open questions were adapted from Zhao (2012). The results from this study show that the competences of the teacher including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competence (Syah, 2013) enhance the motivation of students to learn English. The teacher's personality also has a strong influence on the students' perceptions of their teacher. The teacher's cognitive abilities which include the teacher's competence at teaching English motivate the students to like English as a subject. Next, the teacher's affection for the students also influences the students' motivations who do not only like the subject but to like the teacher. Lastly, the teacher's way of presenting lessons (psychomotor) affect the motivation of the students to learn English. Thus, it can be concluded that the teacher, as one of the external factors, should be able to maximize his/her competence in teaching to motivate the students more when learning English.*

**Keywords:** Influence, teacher, competence, students, motivation, English.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have investigated the students' motivation in learning a foreign language (see Madrid, et al., 1993; Zhao, 2012). One factor that may motivate students in learning, especially learning a language is the teacher himself because a teacher can influence students to like a subject (Gursoy, 2013; Gardner, 1985). The teacher is an

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external factor that can and does influence the success or lack of success of a learning process along with the activities and the material, the relevance of the subject, the feedback, and the classroom environment (Williams & Burden, 1997). While for Ryan and Coper (1995, p. 39) find that teachers who are warm, have empathy, are sensitive, enthusiastic, and humorous are likely to be more successful in teaching.

Based on some preliminary observations at a senior high school in Banda Aceh, it was seen that the students showed little motivation for learning English. The average score of the students in English was only 65. The assumptions of why they had little motivation to learn English was probably because they were not interested in English as a subject. Second, was that this school is a sports school, which means that this school focuses on sports and trains students to be athletes. All the students at this school were more interested in physical activities such as their sports. They were not very interested in learning other subjects except for physical education. However, since English is a compulsory subject high schools and mastering English is important, teachers must encourage the students to learn English.

Teachers themselves cannot be separated from being competent in the subject they teach. Syah (2013) explains that basically, competence is the measure of a teachers' ability to transfer knowledge to students. He also adds that the term 'proficient' is the proper term to indicate that a teacher is highly skilled in teaching.

Since the English teachers are the persons who are responsible for this subject in the schools, it is interesting to try to find out more about the influence of the teachers' competence on the motivation of students to learn English. Since such studies have not been widely conducted in Indonesia, especially in sports schools, this study could provide useful information for other English teachers in special or vocational schools. Therefore, the sole research question developed was: "To what extent does the external factor, the teacher's competence, affect the motivation of EFL students in learning English?"

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Definition of Motivation**

According to Harmer (2007, p. 51), motivation is a kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. Motivation can be a major factor for the success of a student in the learning process. Brown (1981, p. 121) says that motivation is probably the most frequently used term for explaining the success in a task; that is due simply to the fact that if someone is motivated it means that he is more likely to succeed.

### **2.2 The Classifications of Motivation**

According to Tileston (2004, p. 2), motivation can be divided into two kinds; intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is inherent in the learning situation and meets the pupils' needs and purposes. Intrinsic motivation is a force that comes from inside the person and it is not dependent on other people. For example, a student reads a book because he wants to get knowledge and discover

something (Tileston, 2004). Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation is a force to do something that comes from outside the person (Tileston, 2004). People's willingness to participate in an activity to obtain some benefit (Vansteenkiste, Ryan & Deci, 2008) is a kind of extrinsic motivation. For example, a child can be motivated to learn because his parent always gives him praise/rewards for doing his homework well (Vansteenkiste, Ryan & Deci, 2008).

For Santrock (2008), external reward and punishment are the keys to determining the motivation of students and this is called the behavioural perspective. He added that the desire for reward is one of the strongest incentives for human behaviour. Incentives provide positive and/or negative stimuli to motivate the behaviour of students. He also says that students will be motivated if their teacher gives them praise and attention. Thus intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are both important in ELT for EFL (Aydoğan & Albarov, 2015).

### **2.3 Factors that Influence the Motivation of Students**

Syah (2006, p. 144) explains that there are two kinds of factors that can influence the motivation of students to learn: internal and external factors. Internal factors also deal with physiological aspects. According to Syah (2006, p. 145) physiological aspects include physical conditions that can influence the spirit of students in the teaching-learning process. Ill health can decrease cognitive competence, so that students who are unwell may be unable to comprehend study material well.

Syah (2006, p. 146) also adds that psychological aspects include the attitude of the students to the teacher and the subject. He further explains that when a student has a good attitude, it will be a good start for the students themselves in the learning process. On the other hand, if the students' attitude is negative to the teacher and also to the subject it will make it difficult for the student to learn. To handle this, a teacher must use his/her personality to try to influence the students. This is one reason why teachers need to be competent, not only at transferring knowledge but also in educating students to love the subject and as well to be well-behaved.

### **2.4 Teacher's Competence**

In an ideal class, the teacher's role is to help the students reach their goals. Syah (2013, p. 230) explains that a teacher has to have at least three competence: cognitive, affective and psychomotor in teaching, and he also adds one more competence, that is - personality that will back up all the three competence above.

#### **2.4.1 Cognitive Competence**

Syah (2013, p. 230) says that the teacher's cognitive competence is the teacher's ability to manage and develop his capacity. This competence is also about how he masters the subject that he teaches and the methods and techniques that he uses to teach it. Lawson (1991, as quoted by Syah, 2013) says that a teacher should also master another cognitive competence, which is his ability to transfer cognitive strategies to his students so that they too can study efficiently and effectively.

#### *2.4.2 Affective Competence*

Syah (2013, p. 231) writes that a teacher's affective competence is about feelings and emotions that include love, patience, happiness, caring, sadness, hatred, and other attitudes toward him and others. He also wrote that there are some attitudes and feelings related to the profession of teaching, self-concepts and self-esteem, self-efficacy and contextual efficacy, attitudes of self-acceptance and the acceptance of others.

#### *2.4.3 Psychomotor Competence*

Syah (2013, p. 234) explains that generally, psychomotor competence is how a teacher acts in the classroom, how he sits, stands and walks. The teacher also has to speak clearly in explaining the material, and answering questions from students. However, teachers should also be able to demonstrate aspects of learning. For example, teachers must be able to demonstrate skills to write, to make charts and must also be a model for his students.

### **2.5 Related Studies**

A number of researchers have conducted studies about the influence of a teacher towards his students' motivation in learning. Madrid, et al. (1993) conducted a research study at three educational levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary (university) in Granada, West Indies. They studied the sources of motivation in the EFL classroom. One of the aspects analysed was the influence of the English teacher as one source to enhance the students' motivation. In general, the results showed that the teacher has a great influence in stimulating the motivation of his learners to learn the foreign language. Specifically, the results at the primary level showed that a large majority of the learners liked their current teachers who understood them and explained things well. They indicated that the ideal teacher is a teacher who has didactic ability with good personal characteristics and appearance. At the higher school levels, the results showed that students expected that their teacher to have some characteristics such as mastering English well including having good pronunciation, being good to the students, able to attract the attention of the students to teach-learn English as well as able to explain things well. Furthermore, the teacher should have good physical appearance. Lastly their teacher should inspire confidence, establish a good relationship with the students, be patient and pleasant, calm, and reasonable in his demands. At the university level, students preferred a good foreign language teacher who can make the teaching-learning process enjoyable and the teacher must be proficient in the foreign language.

Another study has been done by Zhao (2012) with students from a college in China. The result of this study found that their teacher is one of the external factors that influence the students' motivation in learning. This study revealed five aspects that were external factors for the students' motivation in learning such as the teacher, the materials and activities, the relevance, the feedback and the classroom environment. All five aspects are important factors which contribute to create a pleasant and motivational classroom climate. From the five aspects, feedback ranked as the most important factor.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted at a special school for athletes in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This school was established in 2007. The samples were 24 students consisting of nine males and 15 females. Their ages ranged from 17 to 18 years old.

A questionnaire with a mix of closed and open questions was used requiring the students to choose an answer from a range of multiple choices followed by giving their reasons for their choice of answer. This was aimed at obtaining more detailed answers. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian to ensure that the students fully understood the questions. The questionnaire was adopted from Zhao (2012). There were only five questions, all of which were related to teachers as an external factor. Teachers are the external factor that most influences students' motivation. In this research, we only looked at the teacher factor. The questionnaire, translated into English, is shown below.

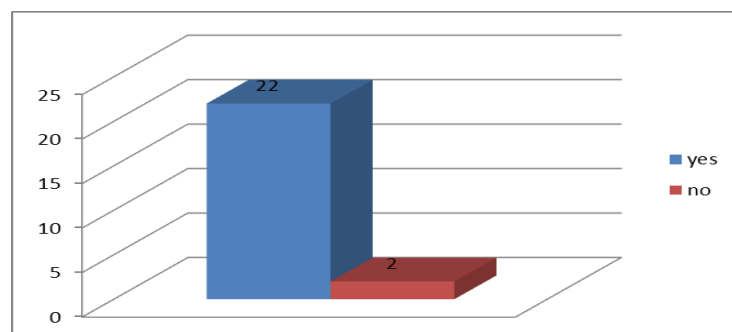
**Table 1.** The questionnaire (adopted from Zhao, 2012).

| Number | Item  | Reason |
|--------|---|--------|
| 1.     | I look forward to going to class because my English teacher is good.<br>Yes                      No   |        |
| 2.     | My efforts at learning English depend to a large extent on whether I like my English teacher or not.<br>Yes                      No                   |        |
| 3.     | It would be better to have native English speakers as English teachers.<br>Yes                      No  |        |
| 4.     | If the teacher does not have high proficiency in English, the students will certainly be unable to learn English well.<br>Yes                      No |        |
| 5.     | Teachers should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style.<br>Yes                      No   |        |

### 4. RESULTS

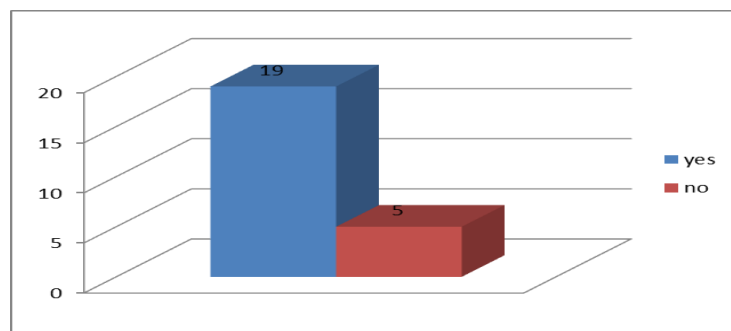
#### 4.1 Results from the Questionnaire

The first item asked about the students' preference about their English teacher. Figure 1 shows the result from item number 1 "*I look forward to going to class because my English teacher is good*". Figure 1 shows that from the 24 students; 22 students (92%) agreed with that statement, whilst 2 students (8%) disagreed with it.



**Figure 1.** Item #1: *I look forward to going to class because my English teacher is good.*

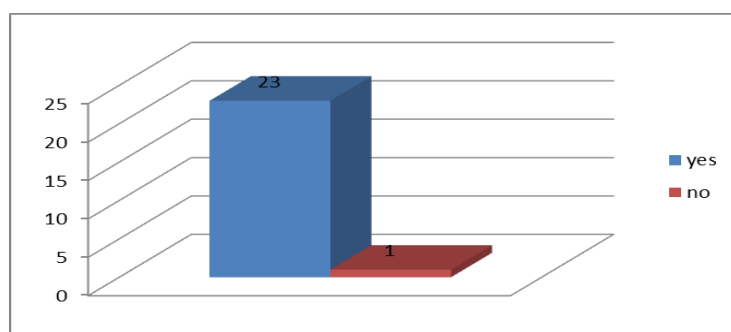
Item number 2 inquires if their effort to learn English depends on whether they like their English teacher or not. Figure 2 shows the result.



**Figure 2.** Item #2: *My efforts at learning English depend to a large extent on whether I like my English teacher or not.*

Figure 2 shows that 19 students (79%) agreed with the statement. This means that their effort to learn English depends on whether they like their English teacher or not. If they dislike their teacher, they cannot learn well. It is natural that everyone including students need to be treated well and with love. It is also natural that they are likely to choose the English teacher who loves them. Meanwhile, only 5 students (21%) disagreed with that statement.

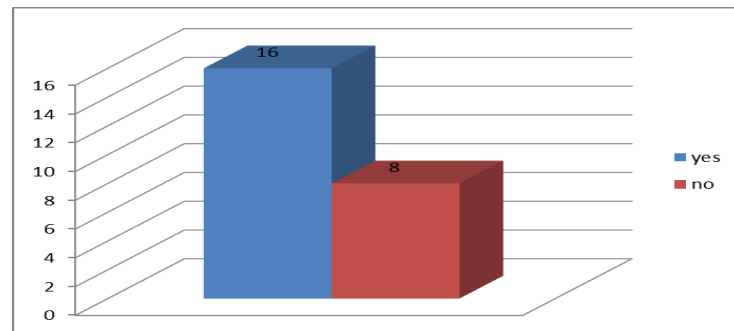
Figure 3 shows the result from the item which asked about their opinion of having native-speaking English teachers.



**Figure 3.** Item #3: *It would be better to have native English speakers as English teachers.*

Figure 3 shows that 23 students (96%) said that they would like to have native English speakers as their English teachers. Meanwhile, only 1 student (4%) disagreed with the statement given. Based on our own experience as students, we would feel challenged to learn from 'the owner' of the language that we were learning. The other reason was that we can imitate the native teacher's speech, intonation, and pronunciation of words in English. This is, therefore, related to the teacher's cognitive competence as explained by Syah (2013, p. 230) that the teacher's cognitive competence is the teacher's ability in managing and developing his capacity.

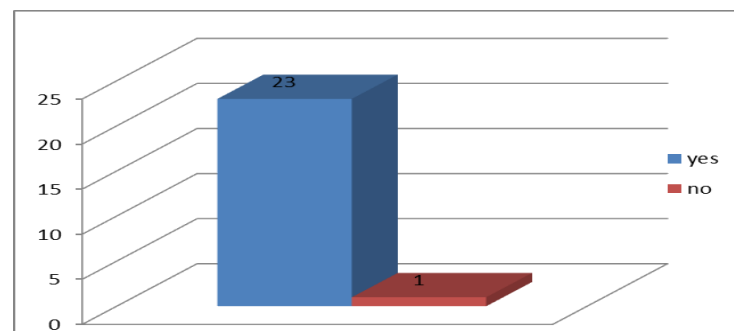
Item number 4 is intended to find out the students preference for their teachers' language proficiency, and Figure 4 shows the result.



**Figure 4.** Item #4: *If the teacher does not have high language proficiency, the students will certainly be unable to learn English well.*

Figure 4 shows that 16 students (67%) agreed with the given statement, they said that the teacher should have high language proficiency so that they will be able to learn English well. Meanwhile, the other 8 students (33%) disagreed. Based on the interviews that we had with them, they hoped that their teacher should have high language proficiency to assist them to master the learning process well, manage the classroom and answer their questions correctly. Thus, their teacher's cognitive competence is important to enhance the students' motivation to learn English.

Finally, Figure 5 presents the results of the students' views on their teachers' teaching style.



**Figure 5.** Item #5: *Teachers should teach in a dynamic and interesting teaching style.*

Figure 5 shows that 23 students (96%) agreed with the statement, only 1 student disagreed with it. It is clear that almost all students agreed that their ideal teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style. This condition will make them more motivated in the learning process. This is related to the teacher's psychomotor and cognitive competence. As Syah (2008, p. 234) says that the teacher's psychomotor competence is how the teacher acts in the classroom and his cognitive competence is the mastering of the subject that he teaches, plus the methods, and techniques that he uses to teach it.

## 4.2 Responses from the Students

Responses were obtained from the answers that the students wrote on the questionnaire. The responses based on each question from items number 1 to 5 are set out as follows:

#### 4.2.1 *"I look forward to going class because my English teacher is good"*

The results of questionnaires show that almost all students (92%) agreed that they look forward to going to class because their English teacher is good. Students' answers are presented below (S refers to the student's code and responses are referred to as R). The students' answers have been translated into English.

The following are some of the students' responses to "having good teachers to motivate them to come to class is very important".

- (R1) *If a teacher is good and always gives students good advice, students will be more motivated to learn and to come to class. (S3)*
- (R2) *If the teacher is good, friendly, patient, and also has affection for the students, we will be interested in coming to class. (S1)*
- (R3) *If the teacher is friendly, has a good relationship and is patient in teaching, students will not be afraid to ask the teacher questions, thus we will be diligent to come to the class. (S2)*

From the excerpts, it is clear that most students would like to join in the class if the teacher has a good personality and shows affection to the students. We conclude that those teachers with good personality competence and affective competence influence the students' desire to join in the class. This means that the majority of students agree that they look forward to going to a class because their English teacher is good.

In line with this, Syah (2013, p. 226) agrees that a good teacher may be patient, and has a sense of humour. He further agrees that a friendly teacher will make students more comfortable and they will enjoy the study more, and this will make them more interested to join the teaching-learning process. However, there are students who disagreed that they come to class because of their teacher, such as:

- (R4) *I am more focused in learning English, not depend on a good teacher who teaches me. I am more motivated to attend the class depending on the teacher's teaching style. (S4)*
- (R5) *I am motivated to attend the class because I like it, not depending on a good teacher. (S5)*

From the excerpts above, although many students agree that they would like to join the class because they like their English teacher, but for these students, learning English is their priority no matter what the teacher's competence is.

#### 4.2.2 *"My effort of English learning depends to a large extent on whether I like my English teacher or not"*

The results from the questionnaire showed that a big majority of the students (79%) admitted that their efforts at learning English depends to a large extent on whether they like their English teacher or not, while only 5 students (21%) disagreed. Some of their positive responses are as follows.



(R6) *My effort in learning English depend on my English teacher, if I like my English teacher, I will like to learn English, too. (S7)*

(R7) *If I like my English teacher, I will be interested in learning English. (S6)*

(R8) *If I like my English teacher, I will have fun learning with the teacher. (S8)*

The above excerpts show that students' efforts in learning English depend on their perception about their English teacher, whether they like their English teacher's personality or not. This is also related to the teacher's personality competence. If the teacher builds a good relationship with the students, it will motive them to learn.

Nonetheless, there were also some who disagreed with the above responses, they are as follows.

(R9) *My efforts in learning English do not depend on my English teacher, it comes from me. (S11)*

(R10) *I like to study English because English is an international language and it does not depend on whether I like my English teacher or not. (S14)*

From the excerpts above, we can learn that there are students who say that their efforts to learn English do not depend on their teacher, but their efforts come from themselves, because they know that English is important to them.

#### 4.2.3 *"It would be better to have native English speakers as English teachers"*

The results from the questionnaire show that almost all of the students (96%) agreed that they want to have English native speakers as their English teachers, whilst only 1 student disagreed. The reasons can be seen in the following excerpts.

(R11) *I think English is important, thus I want to speak English like native English speakers. (S10)*

(R12) *I always want to practice to speak English with native English teachers. (S9)*

(R13) *I want to practice to speak English with a native speaker. (S12)*

The excerpts above show that most foreign language learners tend to imitate their teachers. Therefore, they think they will be good if they can directly imitate a native speaker. Thus, the teacher's psychomotor competence influences a students' motivation in learning English as well. As Syah (2013, p. 234) says, psychomotor competence is one of four teacher's competence that make for a successful learning process. Another response is as the following.

(R14) *I do not like English, so I have never practiced to speak English with a native speaker. (S13)*

#### 4.2.4 *"If the teacher does not have high proficiency in English, the students will certainly be unable to learn English well"*

The results from the fourth statement show that most students (67 %) agreed that the teacher's proficiency (cognitive competence) had an influence on the students'

motivation to learn English. Meanwhile, 8 students (33%) disagreed with that statement. Their reasons can be seen in the following excerpts.

- (R15) *If the teacher does not have high proficiency, certainly I will be unable to learn English well. (S15)*
- (R16) *In my opinion, the teacher will influence my efforts to learn English; if my teacher does not have a high proficiency in English, it will make it more difficult for me to understand what he is teaching. (S17)*
- (R17) *Of course teachers should have high proficiency in English, because in the learning process, if students do not understand the lesson we will ask the teacher. If the teacher cannot answer our questions correctly, we cannot learn English well. (S16)*

The above excerpts show that the teacher's proficiency in teaching was important to make the students able to learn English well. This is related to the teacher's cognitive competence in teaching. If a teacher has high language proficiency, it will make it easy for the students to learn well.

However, there were also other responses that show disagreement with the statement above, they are as follows.

- (R18) *I want to be better than my English teacher, if my English teacher cannot answer my questions I will ask somebody else. (S20)*
- (R19) *Learning English is not only done in school, but I can do it everywhere. It depends on my efforts to learn English, thus if I want to learn English I can learn from someone else. (S19)*
- (R20) *According to me, learning English does not depend on the teacher's high language proficiency. It depends on someone's motivation to learn English, if someone doesn't have high motivation for learning, even though their teacher has high language proficiency, it is meaningless. (S18)*

#### 4.2.5 "Teacher should teach in a dynamic and interesting teaching style"

The results from the questionnaires showed that almost all the students (96%) answered 'yes' or 'agree' that the teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style, while only 1 student disagreed. Some of the positive reasons can be seen in the following excerpts.

- (R22) *The way which makes me interested in learning is that the teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style. If the teacher only uses the same boring method in teaching every day, it will make me bored and I will not be motivated to learn English. (S21)*
- (R23) *If the teacher teaches with an interesting teaching style it will make the students interested to learn, and not get bored (S22)*
- (R24) *It is interesting if we learn English from an interesting teaching style. And also, I sometimes like if the teacher uses humour and can give us some entertainment. (S24)*

The excerpts above show that the teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style, thus a teacher's psychomotor competence has an influence on the motivation of his students to learn English. However, there was one student who disagreed with this, his reason was as below.

*(R25) In my opinion, if we always want to learn from a dynamic and different teaching style, it can be difficult for us to adapt with the everyday teaching style. (S23)*

Accordingly, this particular student sees that a dynamic teaching style can make it harder for a student to adapt to the ordinary, everyday teaching styles.

### 4.3 Discussion

The teacher has a strong influence on the motivation of student to learn English. Previous studies have also shown that the teacher has a strong influence on motivation to learn such as the results from the research of Madrid, et al. (1993) and Zhao (2012). Moreover, teachers are an external factor that influences motivation in learning English. Williams and Burden (1997) explain that the teacher mainly contributes two factors to the learners' motivation which are the teacher's personality and the teacher's teaching style.

The results of this study have also shown that the teacher's personality and his cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities enhance motivation to learn English. The first is the teacher's cognitive ability that includes his proficiency in teaching; students hope that their teachers will have high language proficiency for teaching English. Item number 4 about the proficiency of the teacher also shows that 67% of the students agreed with this statement. The reasons stated in R6, R7, R8, R16 and R17 are samples of the responses from the students.

The second is teacher's affective ability which is about the teacher's affection for the students, if teachers love their students it will make students more motivated to learn English. The last question is about the teacher's psychomotor abilities, this is the way in which the teacher presents activities during the teaching-learning process. The teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style. Some of the students' responses such as R12, R22, R23 and R24 reflect the desire for the teacher to have these competences.

However, this study reveals some differences from Zhao's (2012) study. Both studies found that if an English teacher is good, students will be more motivated to attend the class. However, Zhao's respondents found no consensus that learning efforts can depend on whether they like their English teacher or not, by contrast the result of this research found that learning efforts can depend on whether students like their English teacher or not. The third item revealed that most students have a preference for having a native speaker as their English teacher. Related to item number 4, Zhao's study shows that many students disagree that the teacher's language proficiency will directly influence their motivation, yet, in this research most students agreed with this statement. For the last item, both Zhao's research and this research agree that the teacher should teach with a dynamic and interesting teaching style. Therefore, the teacher as an external factor can greatly influence students' motivation to learn English.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to find out how an external factor, the teacher's competence, enhanced the motivation of students to learn English. This study was conducted with 24 students who studied at a high school especially for athletes in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The questionnaire was distributed to them and they were required to fill in the closed and open questions. This study shows that the teacher's competence (cognitive, affective, psychomotor competence) can enhance the motivation of the students to learn English. From the results of the open questions, the students revealed that there are some criteria that they expect from their teacher. These are: to build a good and close relationship (with the students), to master the materials, to have high English language proficiency, to have a good sense of humour and to teach with an interesting teaching style. In conclusion, the teacher as an external factor highly influences the motivation of students to learn English.

This study, however, is limited to a particular school and a very small sample. Thus we might not be able to generalize these findings. It is important to conduct similar research with larger samples. It is also suggested that other researchers conduct similar research to further investigate this and other external factors that affect the motivation of students.

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